

ARMS FOR ARABS—AND WHAT FOR ISRAEL?

Dilemmas in the Search for a Middle East Balance of Power

HAL LEHRMAN

A NEW and unpleasant season has opened in relations between the United States and Israel, a season of cold climate and angry winds, more dangerous—so Israel believes—than any such season before.

In the great debate since 1948 between Washington and Tel Aviv-Jerusalem on how to make peace with the Arabs, differences, while often sharp, still revolved in the main around an Israeli center. Should Israel be given more American aid or less, in view of Arab resentments? Ought Israel be more restrained and conciliatory toward her neighbors? What must Israel do to find her place in the Arab world? If anything, it was the United States that felt alarm at Israel's positiveness, and Israel that deplored an American tendency to avoid action involving the Arabs.

With the Eisenhower-Dulles administration, all this began to change, and it is now no longer a question of what Israel should

do, or of striving to hold the line on dollar aid. Israel is even reconciled to the possible end of Congressional economic grants altogether in two or, at best, three years. And it is no longer a question of restraining Israel vis-à-vis the Arabs. It has become, in the Israeli view, a question of restraining the United States from plans and policies which, if fully developed, must make aggression by the Arabs inevitable. It is, in short, a question of whether America is going to contribute to Israel's possible destruction.

THIS is how Israel sees it. It is not how the United States sees it. American policymakers do not even believe that Israel is involved, let alone threatened, by our new approach to the Arab states, the purpose of which is to win Arab cooperation in regional security against Soviet attack. Indeed, says Washington, the more that purpose is achieved, the safer Israel will be. For, in the long run, must not little Israel—if she is to survive—find a way to live at peace with the vast Arab world? Would it not contribute greatly to an ultimate Arab settlement with Israel if the Arabs were cordial to the United States, and if the various Arab regimes were stabilized? Rather than seeking to obstruct the integration of the Middle East with cries of alarm, Israel should, in the American view, speed it by affirmative policies of conciliation.

There are some evidences that Israel is willing to adopt such policies. A "new look" has even been detected in Jerusalem. Actually, the recent gestures by Israel to the Arabs do not constitute a radical change of attitude. But they do add something new. They reflect an Israeli effort to roll with the punch of American policy: we Israelis think you Americans are wrong but believe you to be sincere in feeling your policy will help us too; moreover, we have no alternative since you are big and we are small; we must try to adjust ourselves to the realities

NO READER of the newspapers can doubt that the differences between Israel and the Eisenhower administration with regard to policy in the Middle East have sharpened in recent months. Just what these differences are, and what they involve, is here reported by HAL LEHRMAN, who—as COMMENTARY readers have reason to know—has in recent years made himself one of the closest, and soberest, observers of Jewish affairs, foreign and domestic, writing in English. Mr. Lehrman has been the recipient of two Guggenheim fellowships, is the author of two books, *Russia's Europe* (1947) and *Israel: The Beginning and Tomorrow* (1952), and is well-known as a lecturer throughout the country. A native New Yorker, he started his career as a foreign correspondent whose special fields of interest were Eastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. In our October issue, Mr. Lehrman wrote on the Jewish struggle for restitution of heirless property in Austria; his last report on Israel appeared in June: "American Policy and Arab-Israeli Peace."

of your power; therefore we are continuing our pursuit of coexistence with the Arabs.

Washington, however, sees the Israeli concessions as too small to have effect. And Jerusalem sees the perils of American policy as too enormous, after all, simply to be accepted with resignation.

The argument now focuses on guarantees and equal treatment for Israel in the Western program for Arab military aid. The basic issue, however, is at least as old as the Israeli state. It is the classic dispute over the nature of the Arab mind—and methods of influencing it. In seeking enlightenment on current aspects of the dispute, this writer, as usual, has had the benefit of frank discussion with all parties and authorities in exchange for the customary preservation of his informants' anonymity.

THREE developments of major importance have affected the Middle East this year. The United States has begun a program of military aid to Iraq. The British have agreed to leave Suez. The United States is offering military aid to Egypt.

In each of these situations, Washington and Jerusalem differ on virtually every aspect and every implication. They are diametrically opposed in evaluating the results for the Arabs, the impact on Israel's security, and the action, if any, which should be taken as a consequence.

Balance of power: It reveals Israel's growing physical fear of the Arabs that the term "balance of power," in its essentially military meaning, has come to the fore in Israeli public and diplomatic discussion.

According to the Israelis, their country—even without foreign aid for the Arabs—is permanently confronted with the danger of Arab superiority. In population, she is hopelessly outweighed by 40 million Arabs. Geographically, she is locked in by hostile borders on every side except the sea. Economically she cannot begin to match—even with the most exuberant estimates of German reparations, world Jewish philanthropy, other foreign assistance, and her own earning potential—the cash resources of the sprawling, oil-soaked Arab domain. Virtually every weapon appropriate to the limited field of battle—World War II tanks, transport, guns, conventional aircraft, and early-model jets—is available to any country that can afford it.

Israeli defense expenditures are secret, but it is a fact that the combined *military* budgets of the Arab states already greatly exceed the *total* budget of Israel.

Israel did win her War of Independence against the Arabs, of course, despite massive inequalities. And Israel today is hugely stronger in economy, manpower, training, and matériel than at the moment of her victory. But that victory owed at least as much to Arab disorganization as to Jewish prowess. How long can Israel depend on the Arabs' inability to develop their latent strength and unite forces?

In fact, say some Israeli experts, the Arabs already hold superiority in such classes of equipment as jet planes and field artillery. What happens to the balance, then, if the West now helps swell Arab strength without compensatory additions to the Israeli force?

Evacuation of the Suez Canal, Israelis warn, removes the obstacle of a British army to any Egyptian adventure across the border. It places airfields at Egypt's disposal, and yields her the largest military depot in the world, with valuable power plants, repair shops, and other heavy equipment—and even a radar network which assertedly can detect the take-off of planes anywhere in Israel. The Israelis say, moreover, that they have been able to obtain only the vaguest assurances that the British will carry away or otherwise render harmless the vast moveable contents of the Suez arsenal. Israeli officers have wryly admitted to me that, when the British left Palestine in 1948, "We got along for two whole years thanks to 'destroyed' British equipment."

As if the Suez threat were not enough, the United States has put a large military mission into Iraq; we are embarked on a program, for an indefinite number of years ahead, of "beefing up" the Iraqi forces with weapons and special training; and we are negotiating to do the same for the Egyptians. How long can Israel, which counts for her survival on keeping pace in strength with enemies vowed to her destruction, compete in financial outlay and procurement against the U.S. Treasury?

THE American reply is a complete denial. It is not true that the Arabs at present have any edge in armaments. Israel has

had full opportunity to buy arms abroad, and has made full use of it. Jet planes obtained from the French, say, are as good as anything the Egyptians or others have got from the British. The Israelis are not behind in any category of weapon.

More important, Israel continues to hold superiority in those elements of war which, in the last analysis, cancel out even inferiority in weight of weapons when the last battle is fought: standards of military organization, quality of training, and fighting spirit. Western military observers in 1948 made the mistake of overestimating the Arabs and underestimating the Israelis in these departments. They are not making the same mistake today. They have an abiding respect for Israeli military doctrine, methods, and capacities. They see no reason, as yet, to revise their low opinion of Arab *élan* and techniques as observed in the last encounter. Indeed, from the point of view of mutual regional security against the Soviets, this is seen as reason enough by itself for a massive Western training effort.

The Suez evacuation will not leave behind any sizable quantities of matériel for Egyptian use. True, turbines, generators, and the like will remain in place. (Heavy equipment would be just as difficult to move into Suez as out of it, and must therefore be left for quick availability if the base is ever reactivated against Soviet assault on Turkey or an Arab state in accordance with the Anglo-Egyptian agreement.) But these are not aggressive factors. The radar net aims at the sea, not across Sinai toward Israel, and is purely defensive. The departure of the British does not add to Egyptian striking power; their new airfields will not teach Egyptian pilots to fly any better.

As for military aid programs, the American rebuttal proceeds, the Iraqi project is vastly overrated by the Israelis, and the Egyptian one does not even exist. Exact figures for the Iraqi program are classified and unattainable. But the Iraqi military set-up is pitifully unprepared for expansion. Further, it is based mostly on British tradition. "Offshore procurement" of British equipment financed by American funds will fill some deficiencies in Iraqi supply, U. S. matériel others. Transport and signal equipment will form an important part of the program. Naturally, some artillery and

other weapons will be sent, but nothing in quantity enough to change the balance of power for a long time to come. Our mission reached Iraq last April, yet deliveries were not to begin before late October or November—a token of the smallness of the project in terms of fighting power.

If this is how trivial the Iraqi "threat" is, the Americans declare, how much less perilous is the program for Egypt, which is not even on paper. The Israelis are jittery about arms grants that may never materialize. The Egyptians, whom the Israelis see as thirsting for weapons, actually do not want our weapons; we are trying to persuade them to take some. And even if they do, one well-placed American told me, "nothing in the scope of the projected Egyptian program—or the approved Iraqi program—can possibly upset the internal Middle Eastern balance of power in the foreseeable future."

THE reason for this lies at the core of the programs, in their aims and motivations, which are *political* rather than *military*. This, it is asserted, the nervous Israelis ignore or wilfully discount.

Arab Armament, Its Purposes and Consequences: In the U.S. strategic concept, Iraq and Egypt form part of the "Northern Tier" bulwark which the West must stretch across the top of the Middle East from Turkey to Pakistan. Iraq is the backstop under the Caucasus against Soviet penetration below Iran via the Caspian, below Turkey via the Black Sea. Egypt is cardinal, though in the hinterland, because of crucial Suez. The other Arab states lie in the field of maneuver across which Allied forces would operate.

Now in all this giant zone of defense, according to informed American estimates, only Turkey has a sizable force in being, and only Turkey, Israel, and Jordan's small Arab Legion are capable of putting up any kind of fight against the Soviet titan commensurate with their numbers. Training and equipment could render the other Arab armies capable of performing some campaign function, but militarily the general Arab potential is not even a secondary element in regional defense calculations.

Moreover, it is not assured that the Arabs would be willing to lend their power to the common cause. Iraq has undertaken commit-

ments to use American military grants for non-aggressive purposes only, but she has *not* subscribed to the Turko-Pakistan coalition. Although her present leaders are pro-Western, public opinion there frantically opposes "imperialist" involvements and is little aware of Communist dangers.

This is even truer of Egypt. Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, head of the military junta, cannot go faster than his own subordinates, many of whom are still obsessed with anti-colonialism (with overtones of neutralism, if nothing worse). Nor can he ignore the opposition of the Moslem Brotherhood, which even denounces the Suez agreement as a national betrayal because it falls short of immediate and total British expulsion. In the present popular mood, a military agreement with the United States might be interpreted as a sell-out and a mere switch from British to American dominion.

It may be necessary for the West to accept less than alliance in return for arms grants, but the benefits would still be substantial, even indispensable, for Allied mobility and security in the Middle East.

As cordiality developed, it would become more possible for the Arab regimes to take a frankly pro-Western position. In the event of global war, it would be desperately important to have order behind our lines, local regimes able to enforce it, leaders sympathetic to us, and populations friendly enough to supply native labor and receive our troops, or at least not try to sabotage and assassinate them. Grants of equipment to Arab states would strengthen their local police, win popular approval, and make friends among the military (especially important in a junta-ruled country like Egypt).

All these objectives are intrinsically political. In fact, a tendency is observable in certain Washington military circles to lament the expense of such "political pistols" when equal expenditures elsewhere for purely military use might produce more visible advantages.

But politico-military aid is regarded by our top planners now as a considered element in our over-all Middle Eastern policy. To prod Cairo toward compromise with London, we actually committed ourselves to possible arms grants once an Anglo-Egyptian settlement was achieved. "Political pistols" can pacify and befriend the rulers and the

ruled, it is maintained, over the enormous stretches of Arab land where revolution and non-cooperation might otherwise be worth a host of divisions to Moscow.

ISRAELIS hold, however, that such reasoning is unsupported by anything in past Arab performances, present Arab declarations, or future Arab capacities.

A glance at the record, they assert, must show how absurd it is to count on the continuity of any Arab regime, entirely apart from its stabilization. For instance, not very long ago the State Department was setting great store by such people as General Mohammed Naguib in Egypt and Colonel Adib Shishakli in Syria. Well, "Strong Man" Naguib has been eased into semi-obscurity and the heroic Shishakli took off abruptly one day for distant climes. In Iraq, talks began with Mohammed Fadhil al-Jamali as Premier, ended with Nuri es-Said. How can the Americans be sure that weapons ticketed for any particular Arab regime will find it still doing business? As one Israeli put it, such arms are going on a blind date.

Besides, it is almost frivolous, the Israelis feel, to hope that the Turko-Pakistan pact will receive any positive reinforcement from Arabs, who continue to profess that there is sufficient regional defense apparatus in the League of Arab States and hence no further arrangements against the Soviets are necessary. Iraq has not only not joined the Northern Tier structure, despite Western fanfare in anticipation, but has publicly avoided confessing that she has even agreed to the minimum requirement imposed by Congressional legislation for arms grants by promising the arms will not be used aggressively. The Americans are surely telling the truth when they say that Iraq has taken the pledge, but in the Iraqi parliament, responding to a direct question, the Premier stated flatly that Iraq had signed nothing.

Arabs everywhere certainly crave weapons, say the Israelis, but their slogan now is: get them in Iraqi style—with no strings at all, at least none visible. In Egypt, Nasser is evidently reckoning that the arms can be got without even invisible strings. Iraq at least has accepted an American military mission, but Nasser has openly declared that Egypt won't, and that he will make no commitments of any sort. He even talks of

Egypt's playing the same role in the Middle East that India is playing, to our despair, in Asia. He says these things, Israelis believe, not because he fears the opposition but because he thinks he can get arms from us anyway. To hope that from such a position Nasser could conceivably move all the way to an alliance—even if he should survive that long—is regarded in Jerusalem as the rankest wishful thinking.

ISRAELIS are so tired of proving the Arabs' indifference to the Soviet menace that they no longer dwell on the point. Their intelligence data assertedly indicates the presence of pro-Communist zealots in lower-echelon Arab military cadres, even of a party member as Defense Minister in one of the governments the Americans reportedly have been thinking of supplying with weapons against Russia.

Israelis will concede that the rank and file of the Arab governing class are not fellow-travelers. But neither that class (with rare exceptions) nor the masses can by any stretch of evidence be rated as anti-Communist or even conscious of Communism as a major problem. It would be naive, also, to count on considerations of gratitude or friendship to bind any Arab regime or people to loyal collaboration with a Western garrison. The Arabs will smile upon the Westerner only so long as he seems a sure winner, the Israelis warn.

Meanwhile, however, one does not have to go to great effort to demonstrate that the Arabs do regard Israel as their prime enemy. Major Salah Salim, Egypt's Minister of National Guidance, has declared that the Palestine problem "can be solved only by force. That force will not be achieved until the Suez Canal is freed. The Egyptian army is unable to fight as long as the British army separates it from its bases. . . ." On one day Premier Nasser says that "unless Israel is pushed back at least to the boundaries determined repeatedly by the United Nations, the situation threatens to explode. Such an explosion will be far less costly to the Arab world than to the patrons of Israel who are responsible for keeping her alive." On another day Nasser is reported as saying that even the Partition boundaries would not be narrow enough and that Israel must surrender the Negev to have peace—in other words,

agree to her virtual erasure from the map. Similar sentiments, and worse, are periodically and authoritatively uttered in the other Arab states.

If these expressions are issued for popular consumption, the Israelis point out, then it must be because the populace finds them agreeable. And if the time comes when action to back such views seems feasible, then a war-eager regime could count on mass support. Given the social misery of the Arab world, foreign adventures sure of popularity in advance can be tempting. The one prerequisite is reasonable hope of success.

Here, say the Israelis, is where the balance of power emerges as vital. If the Arabs have refrained from starting a "second round" with Israel, it is because they remember the first one and do not think the balance of power has yet shifted enough in their favor. Israel's ability to look formidable has been the surest keeper of Middle Eastern peace. Let this balance be tipped too far by Suez, let enough arms flow into Iraq or Egypt or other places, let the Arab colonels feel themselves well-stuffed with Western tactics and equipment—and peace will be lost.

ISRAELIS call it idle to rely, as the Americans do, on Arab promises not to use their gift guns for aggression. Our times have shown that "aggression," like "democracy," is a word of elastic definition. It is so easy to turn "aggression" into "self-defense." Especially if the Arab suspects his American friends would not really object. The more the United States courts the Arab to the neglect of Israel, the surer the Arab will be that he may march, when he is prepared, with impunity. Israelis point forebodingly to the recent Egyptian harassment of Jewish settlements near the long dormant Gaza strip as token of the cockiness which can arise as Arab conviction grows that Israel is being abandoned.

Guarantees and Assurances: Israel would be happiest to settle for a total moratorium on Western arms to the Middle East, and be glad to do without a single bonus cartridge if only the Arabs received none either. By eliminating a provocation to regional disorder, such a moratorium would increase rather than reduce regional security against an external aggressor. But if Washington has

gone too far in commitment on arms programs to cancel them now, Israel feels that she is entitled to certain specific and concrete compensations:

(1) International action to insure that the Suez Canal will be kept open for free passage of Israeli ships and foreign-flag cargoes bound to and from Israel, including military supplies.

(2) Arms grants for Israel commensurate with types and quantities of similar grants to Arab states.

(3) Inclusion of Israel, and consultation with her, in any regional defense arrangements made by the West.

(4) Binding assurances of military action to counter large-scale Arab aggression.

It is intolerable, Israel contends, that the Egyptians be permitted to flout the Constantinople Convention of 1888, which established Suez as a free international waterway in peace and *in war*, as well as Security Council injunctions to keep the passage open without discrimination.

Egypt does not own the Canal and has no right to interfere with Israeli trade. Yet she has confiscated cargoes on neutral vessels and, when Israel sent a small, unarmed ship of her own through the Canal for the first time as a test case, seized the vessel and imprisoned the crew, though beclouding the issue by fantastic charges of attack on local fishermen and/or coastal villagers. (One neutral delegate to the UN has described it thus: "The perfect crime—no motive, no weapon, no body.") The United Nations, despite Egypt's defiance, has failed to act effectively or even brand her as an aggressor.

The British have a moral obligation to insure proper custodianship of the Canal after their departure, and ought to exact Egyptian guarantees as part of the evacuation terms. The United States has means, the Israelis believe, for bringing pressure on Egypt inside, or if necessary outside, the UN. Molestation of foreign flags carrying Israeli goods hurts Israel economically as well as militarily, since it compels her to such ruinous expenditures as purchase of oil and other supplies in distant and costly markets. Admittedly a few ships get through, but the Israelis estimate that 90 per cent of the traffic which might reach them via the Canal is diverted to avoid trouble with the Egyptians.

Last year, when Israel seemed to be resisting an order by a UN representative on the B'not Yaakov water-power project, groundlessly alleged to be detrimental to Syria, the United States did not hesitate to withhold announcement of further economic aid to Israel until she had yielded. But at Suez, where Israel suffers clear and major damage and where the highest organ of the UN has pronounced judgment, the United States limits herself to formal demurrers.

IN THE military arena, the Israeli case continues, failure to balance arms for the Arabs with arms for Israel would be not only unjust but, as indicated, thwart the main Washington objective in its Arab-Israeli policy: preservation of the peace.

The Israelis are perhaps willing now to settle for less than gun-for-gun grants equal to total receipts of all the Arab countries combined. But they do consider that the scope of the Arab programs should be precisely determined and that some equitable ratio ought to be adopted whereby Israel would not be compelled to buy her way toward a position of comparative security. The only way to avoid the crippling arms race which Anglo-American policy has always professed to abhor in the Middle East, Israelis maintain, is to distribute arms without favor and with due consideration for political realities in the region. The United States seeks Arab assent to a pro-Western position, but Israel took such a fully committed position as long as three years ago, when she applied formally for American arms aid—a request which has never been answered.

Also, the Israeli brief goes on, the Jewish state must definitely be taken into account, and no longer for granted, in any joint planning for the Middle East. Chief rail and road highways—the shortest and swiftest routes for transport of Allied troops from South Mediterranean staging areas toward a Red Army advancing in the Turkish sector—cut across Israel's territory. It would seem foolhardy not to make prior arrangements, by joint consultation, for maximum efficiency and smooth operation. Just because Israel's pro-Western sentiments are known and proved, is it permissible to make no provisions short of the emergency itself?

Here is an area, moreover, in which all the other states have a "collective security"

pact from which Israel is by definition excluded. The new Anglo-Egyptian agreement actually gives official recognition to this pact—which Israel regards as a treaty for potential aggression against her—and provides for positive action in the event of outside attack on any country in the area *except* Israel. Three of the Arab states—Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt—have treaties with Britain which commit her to assist them militarily. Iraq is getting aid from the United States, and Egypt is being offered aid. Both are being invited to join the Turko-Pakistan pact. But Israel is being left entirely alone.

And yet Israel is told that she is secure. Where else do the Western powers behave with such indifference to local fears? When India clamored against American aid to Pakistan, the same aid was eagerly offered to her. The world has just witnessed tremendous diplomatic feats to reassure France that Britain will be by her side and that Germany will not be permitted to outdistance her. Pakistan is not bellicose, and Germany is straining to persuade France that she has no hostile designs. But scarcely a week goes by without some Arab declaration of undying enmity for Israel. Compared to Israel's isolation, the immediate security problems of Asia and Europe—though spread over more square miles—seem almost academic in their present relative intensity.

A minimal Israeli requirement under such conditions is a firm commitment of Western military aid against Arab attack. The Anglo-Franco-American guarantee of 1950 does not suffice, the Israelis assert. It merely affirms opposition to violation of any territorial integrity in the Middle East and speaks of action against aggression without spelling the action out. Israel was not invited to sign the Tripartite Declaration, nor were the Arabs. Israel has no legal status for invoking Western fulfilment, and does not know what the nature of such fulfilment would be. Neither do the Arabs. It is necessary to tell them—and convince them. This can be done only by a new commitment, to be undertaken by the Western Three, or by Britain and the United States, or, if necessary, by the United States alone.

Israelis welcome President Eisenhower's pledge to a Jewish Tercentenary audience in late October that "we shall make sure" U. S. arms are not devoted "to creating local im-

balances which could be used for intimidation of or aggression against any neighboring nations." But, like the 1950 guarantee, this promise has no teeth, does not tell *how*.

Israel does not offer any text of her own to substitute for the Tripartite Declaration. She is not asking Washington to get around Constitutional barriers against engagement of American troops. She observes that ways were found to send help to Indo-China and men to Korea. Formosa seems to be getting protection without violence to the Constitution. Israel feels confident that if Washington desires to find a formula, it will be found. To succeed, the new document must reassure Israel and warn the Arab world in the light of the *new* situation created by arms grants and the evacuation of Suez. It must make clear to the Arabs that if they attack they will be confronted not by words but by physical power much greater than Israel or they can muster. Similar assurances may—even should—be offered the Arabs, if they will take them. The guarantees Israel seeks are not so much for herself as for peace.

THIS Israeli bill for the tangible insurance of her security does not get enthusiastic reception in Washington.

American spokesmen privately point out that, unlike the B'not Yaakov project, Suez is not being affected by American economic grants. Thus United States action against Israel when she ignored the UN is no precedent for withholding grants to Egypt when she shows similar defiance. Such defiance is to be deplored, and the United States has consistently deplored it, inside and outside the UN, but until the seizure of the Israeli *Bat Galim*, statistics show that the Egyptians were interfering less and less with non-military traffic in foreign bottoms. The UN believes there should be no interference at all, and the United States will continue to act in support of this position.

Some military aid to Israel may yet be found feasible, it is indicated, but the Israeli plea for balanced arms *now* is unrealistic in the light of our immediate objectives. Aid for the Arabs is meant to conciliate them, to rid them of their conviction that the United States, being Israel's friend, is their enemy. How could such persuasion succeed if, simultaneously with grants to the Arabs, we were to pour arms into Israel? Or, for that matter,

discuss alliances and strategic planning with Israel? The Arabs believe that Israel seeks to expand at their cost. The United States wishes to convince them otherwise, but can hardly do so by making Israel militarily stronger. Especially when this strengthening is unnecessary. As has been demonstrated, the aid that the Arabs receive will not enable them to attack Israel.

The Arabs know, and we are constantly reaffirming it, that the existence of Israel is an unshakable element in American policy, and the preservation of Israel an enduring commitment of the American people. In recent times, U.S. policy has grown increasingly concerned with the larger problem of regional security, which has proportionately diminished its attention to Israel. But this is in no way to be taken as a discounting of Israel. It is inconceivable that any attempt to destroy Israel would fail to arouse American feelings. Arabs who receive American aid do so with the firm understanding that it is for regional and internal self-defense, as prescribed by Congress in voting the funds, and not for aggression against neighbors. We reserve the right to decide what aggression means. Should the Arabs break faith, they would speedily learn that we will not tolerate it.

The bulk of the professional specialists in Washington believe new guarantees to Israel are not required or feasible; some of the top-echelon people, however (including Secretary of State John Foster Dulles himself), are described as thinking that Israel, from her own point of view, has reason to feel uneasy and is entitled to reassurance. But what form should it take? A treaty with Israel? This would only set Israel farther apart from her neighbors and confirm the Arab prejudice that we favor her. A unilateral commitment of troops in case of Arab attack? There are Constitutional bars—and Congressional inhibitions—against such advance consignment of American soldiers to foreign shores in the absence of war.

Or should it be a re-wording of the 1950 Declaration? This could be done, and is in fact currently under exploration. But, it is asked, what new combination of words could improve effectively on that document? In it the three powers emphasized "their unalterable opposition to the use of force or threat of force" between any Arab state and Israel;

they pledged that they would "immediately take action, both within and outside the United Nations, to prevent" any violation, or preparation to violate, the frontiers or armistice lines.

In the Washington view, this is pretty strong language as it stands, simple for Arabs and all others to comprehend. Promulgated by the Truman administration, the doctrine has since been emphatically endorsed by Secretary Dulles and Henry A. Byroade, the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs. We have made it plain by the strongest possible implication that we will use all necessary measures against aggression. What else is there to say to the Arabs? And wouldn't mere reiteration by different phrases weaken rather than strengthen the commitment by suggesting that it needs such reinforcement and is not the fixed and permanent position which in reality it is?

TURNING from military grants and guarantees to other aspects of Israel's diplomatic problem in Washington, an inquiring reporter again finds wide, though somewhat less angry, differences of position.

Israel has appeared lately to be making a renewed and special effort to demonstrate her readiness for reasonable discussion with the Arabs. Notably, she is taking steps to free the remainder of blocked refugee accounts—of a value estimated at \$8.5 million, no easy sacrifice for the lean Israeli exchequer. This amount, though originally in Palestinian pounds which have now lost all value, is to be paid out in its numerical equivalent in precious pounds sterling. Israel is offering this without demanding a *quid pro quo* such as the unfreezing of refugee Jewish assets blocked in Iraq.

She has also reaffirmed readiness, apart from a general peace settlement, to negotiate compensation for the Palestinian refugees, and to begin such talks any time the Arabs wish. By patience and a willingness to continue discussion, though she is far from pleased with its present outlines, she is helping to keep the American "TVA" scheme for the Jordan alive. In the UN she has offered to sign non-aggression treaties with any and all Arab states, and she has re-entered the UN-supervised Mixed Armistice Commission for the Jordan frontier. On the Israeli

radio, in Arabic, she has broadcast offers to work out facilities for Arab use of Haifa port and for Arab land communications across the Negev.

High-level American opinion considers some of the Israeli moves most commendable. Release of Arab assets and renewed participation in the Jordan MAC are gratifying, and especially the cooperative attitude toward Eric Johnston's efforts for a Jordan water agreement, on which Washington places much hope as an entering wedge in the pacification of that tortured region. But in certain other aspects, it is thought, the Israeli proposals either do not go far enough, or omit important opportunities, or are cast in a provocative form least likely to gain acceptance.

Such acceptance, according to the American view, is essential to Israel's long-term existence. The Arab world can endure indefinitely, and even prosper after its fashion, with Israel rankling in its bosom. But Israel cannot eternally dwell apart from her natural hinterland of markets and supplies, or waste her substance on arms.

Therefore—and particularly because, having won a war, she should show a victor's generosity—Israel must make it as easy as possible for her sensitive antagonists to enter an agreement. For example, the offer of non-aggression treaties may have been a good propaganda point for Israel abroad, but she must have known that such a proposal, made from a world rostrum, was sure to elicit Arab rejection. The way to peace, say the Americans, is by avoiding publicity—by a painstaking and *quiet* progression, sometimes inch by inch, which will demonstrate Israel's sincerity so clinchingly that the Arabs must reciprocate.

IN WHAT ways, concretely, might Israel help reduce tension? Among the moves suggested by Washington observers are:

(1) Instead of merely inviting talks on refugee compensation, let Israel make a concrete offer. The Arabs are handicapped by the extreme position they have taken against any parleys before repatriation of all refugees who want to return to Israel. It is difficult for them to accept vague proposals. With a specific offer of cash and terms, Arab leaders might find it politically desirable to consider the Israeli program a basis for negotiations.

(2) Soon after the Arab war, Israel offered to take back 100,000 refugees as part of a total plan which would have permanently resettled the remainder in Arab territories outside Israel. Falling on deaf ears, the offer lapsed. Israel should now again declare her willingness to repatriate a limited but substantial number. It is doubtful whether more than a handful would want to return to a country in which their world has disappeared—but the offer would be a face-saver for Arab leadership. On her part, the United States will continue to urge acceptance of UN-sponsored resettlement projects in Arab territory. It is hoped that a Sinai project, where Egypt is supporting preliminary surveys, will eventually take 60,000 refugees out of Gaza. The Jordan TVA plan could provide irrigated land for upwards of 200,000 refugees now living miserably in the wastes along Israel's disturbed eastern frontier.

(3) Organized reprisals against Arab incursions across Israeli borders do not stop marauders and only incite more trouble. Israel should continue scrupulously the practice, which she seems lately to have begun, of refraining from mass counter-attacks. She should reinstate the so-called Local Commanders' Agreements under which Israeli and Jordan authorities in each vicinity cooperate closely to prevent border crossings and to pursue violators. (The Israelis had allowed these agreements to lapse, on grounds of Jordan's failure to take necessary measures for border pacification.) Jordan is now reportedly prepared to give frontier officers full authority and equipment for effective action. Further, Israel should provide larger cooperation to personnel of the UN's Truce Supervision Organization. These observers have performed a valuable function by seeking to fix responsibility for border violations. Their presence has reduced incidents. Yet Israel, it is complained, has declined to permit them freely to patrol her border zones, claiming that unimpeded exercise of their duty would infringe upon her sovereignty.

(4) Finally, Israel should initiate territorial revisions. This does not mean the carving-up of the Negev, which Egyptian spokesmen have at times extravagantly demanded, or similar major surrenders. But the Syrians, for example, could be enormously placated by Israeli cession of small strips in the Huleh-

Tiberias lake region. Often such adjustment would involve just a few yards of land on a river shore where Israel now has enclaves which jut irritatingly into Arab territory. There are also opportunities for amicable revision where Arab villages are separated by Israeli boundary lines from their ancestral farm lands.

TO ISRAELIS, such counsels are in one part acceptable but of doubtful value, in another part seemingly innocent but spiked with dynamite—and in their entirety so mistaken about the Arabs that to accept them might work the opposite effect from that expected.

In the first category Israelis place the recommendations for restoring joint border controls and giving UN observers unrestricted survey of Israeli ground. The commanders' agreements have not succeeded before. It is doubtful they will be more effective in future. At this writing, nevertheless, Israel is about to sign with Jordan to reinstitute them, with some modifications. And when this is done, the Israelis predict, the conciliatory move will be shrugged off by the Arabs—and by American policy-makers—as "trivial."

We Israelis are chided for being "legalists" about free mobility for UN personnel, they continue. Israel, after all, is a sovereign state, not a trustee territory. Even Israeli citizens are not permitted to wander at will in their own military zones. The disposition of our forces is secret. But UN observers go without restraint from one side of the line to the other. It is hardly prudent for us when a foreign officer can have a look at our order of battle in any sector on one day and then spend the next day sipping coffee in Amman. There must be some safeguards. However, we are prepared to make concessions here too. The solution probably will be that, if the Truce officials cease insisting on the *right* to go everywhere they wish, we will issue speedier authorizations on each specific request to go *nearly* everywhere they wish.

For Israel to offer a specific figure on refugee compensation is harder than may appear. It is very difficult, because of Arab land-tenure systems and other complexities, even to know how much money is involved, as neutral investigators have begun to realize. The sum is sure, at the least, to be some

crushing amount like \$100 million, the Israelis estimate. It would be impossible to pay this without borrowing. Who will the lender be? The United States? Israel expects that, sooner or later, the problem will have to come up, and is ready to discuss it. Significantly, however, it has been noted that the Palestine Conciliation Commission, which includes an American member, has always managed until now to let opportunities for discussion of a compensation total slip by.

Far from objecting to reunion of Arab villagers with their farm lands, Israel has made three attempts at such border rectifications in Arab favor—only to see them rejected. The Arabs will not sit down and talk with us, the Israelis say. The Arab leaders insist we must first restore the Partition boundaries, which they themselves obliterated, and take back 800,000 or more refugees, whom they themselves incited to flee and whom they now ignore except as convenient political pawns.

But the advice to make "minor" border adjustments in the north, the Israelis say with some bluntness, is a disingenuous snare for innocents. When the Syrians ask for ten yards of ground down to a riverbank, they are really asking for considerably more: a massive grant of riparian rights to the upper Jordan, rights to which they would be entitled if they touched the river. Far from being trivial, those ten yards were enough to make Lloyd George notify Clemenceau, when the Arab map was being re-drawn after World War I, that Britain could not tolerate a frontier for French-controlled Syria on the Jordan, since this would expose Palestine crippling and make a British mandate inoperable. The same considerations exist today, and highly placed Israelis tell this writer that their government is no more likely to yield those ten yards than the whole of the Negev.

ABOVE all else, however, Israelis question an approach which looks to appeasement as the way to the Arab heart. Having already unfrozen several million dollars from Arab refugee bank accounts, Israelis are only being denounced for it. The more conciliatory you are toward Arabs, the more stubborn they become, because for them conciliation is an admission of fear and weakness. Even so, against our better judgment (and

because of American opinion) we have been conciliatory. But how far must we go? We are even talking of letting the Arabs into Haifa and giving them a Negev highway. This is like inviting Red China to make free use of Honolulu and offering the Soviets transit across Texas.

What do the Arabs propose in exchange? So far, nothing. And what do the Americans urge the Arabs to concede? They ask the Arabs kindly to accept American economic aid to lift their living standards and make homes for the homeless. It is a noble purpose, but hardly amounts to "concessions" from the Arabs. And the only further sign of "cooperation" being demanded from them is that they should also accept weapons!

Can we be blamed, say the Israelis, for proclaiming loudly our desire for peace, instead of whispering it? There is always the chance that some Arabs will hear. Even if not, we are entitled to advance our cause by seeking the world's good opinion. Does not the United States constantly make public offers it knows and regrets the Soviets will not accept?

THERE is, finally, a fear in Israel that American policy-makers will dangerously misconstrue the nature of the *Israeli* as well as of the Arab mind.

The leaders of Israel influence opinion in their country, but do not control it. The point has been made before in these pages (COMMENTARY, June 1954), but American policy, as Israelis see it, renders the fact increasingly and ominously significant. If, for instance, the Israeli government were to take American advice and invite back 100,000 Arab refugees without a substantial Arab concession in exchange, it would be promptly thrown out of office.

Just as a Great Debate has been raging between Washington and Jerusalem, so has a Great Debate been raging inside Israel. Thus far the moderate Sharett government has solidly repulsed extremist counsels. "Beiginism"—the aggressive doctrines of Menahem Beigin and the Revisionist-Herut stalwarts—has lately been rejected once more in the Knesset, and continues to be rejected by public opinion.

But, Israeli observers warn, this is only be-

cause hope remains that, somehow, Israel will not be left intolerably outdistanced by her declared enemies. The situation is likened to that in the United States, where public opinion believes that America is managing by alliances and military growth to keep ahead at least a little bit in the power struggle with the Soviet world. If it were otherwise, Americans would vote Republicans out of office wholesale.

But suppose, it is asked, the people of Israel are required to stand by and watch the Arab world swell in menace. Suppose a feeling spreads that the effect (though not the intention) of U.S. policy will be Israel's destruction, that it is criminally dangerous just to wait, that the Israelis must do *something* to save themselves while they still have time. Without satisfactory guarantees, without any semblance of equality in treatment, with a constantly magnified sense of exclusion and isolation, how long is Israeli public opinion likely to tolerate the increasing gap in strength vis-à-vis the enemy without reacting? Eventually, something would have to give way. Informed Israelis calculate that it would probably be the Israeli people's tolerance of their government's present policy of patience.

IF THE Iraqis or the Egyptians acquire some squadrons of jet planes, and the Israelis none, Israelis will ask their leadership what it proposes to do. The latter will have to supply an answer that will persuade those who feel themselves inadequately protected from the jet planes by bland assurances of ancient date from Washington. The answer, moreover, will have to satisfy the leadership's own party, its opponents, and the men who direct the defense of the country.

Nobody in responsible position suggests that the answer would be an order to march. But it is likely at least to involve measures to counter-balance the planes, the tanks, the guns on the other side. It could mean transferring available funds from economic development to profitless armaments. It could mean the frittering away of resources in an arms race desired neither by Israel nor enlightened American policy. It could, in the end, mean the acceptance of a garrison existence and mentality by a free people.